

world that you have this record, the world will say to you, 'You are not worthy to enjoy the blessings of democracy or anything else.'";

Whereas, since its founding, the United States has imperfectly progressed toward noble goals;

Whereas the history of the United States is the story of people regularly affirming high ideals, striving to reach those ideals but often failing, and then struggling to come to terms with the disappointment of that failure, before committing to try again;

Whereas, on November 4, 2008, the people of the United States elected Barack Obama, an African-American man, as President of the United States; and

Whereas, on February 22, 2012, people across the United States celebrated the groundbreaking of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opened to the public on September 24, 2016, on the National Mall in Washington, District of Columbia: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) acknowledges that all people of the United States are the recipients of the wealth of history provided by Black culture;

(2) recognizes the importance of Black History Month as an opportunity to reflect on the complex history of the United States, while remaining hopeful and confident about the path ahead;

(3) acknowledges the significance of Black History Month as an important opportunity to commemorate the tremendous contributions of African Americans to the history of the United States;

(4) encourages the celebration of Black History Month to provide a continuing opportunity for all people in the United States to learn from the past and understand the experiences that have shaped the United States; and

(5) agrees that, while the United States began as a divided country, the United States must—

(A) honor the contribution of all pioneers in the United States who have helped to ensure the legacy of the great United States; and

(B) move forward with purpose, united tirelessly as a nation "indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

#### SENATE RESOLUTION 46—CALLING ON THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO TAKE EXECUTIVE ACTION TO BROADLY CANCEL FEDERAL STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Mr. SCHUMER (for himself, Ms. WARREN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SANDERS, and Mr. OSSOFF) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. RES. 46

Whereas the United States is facing historic public health and economic crises caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that threatens the financial well-being of nearly every American family;

Whereas even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States also faced a historic student loan crisis, which is currently holding back our struggling economy and restricting opportunity and prosperity for millions of American families;

Whereas nearly 43,000,000 Americans currently hold more than \$1,500,000,000,000 in Federal student loan debt;

Whereas more than 9,000,000 Federal student loan borrowers are currently in default on those Federal student loans;

Whereas the COVID-19 economic recession and historic unemployment have compounded stagnant wages, labor market discrimination, and rising costs of living, making it nearly impossible for many Americans to ever fully repay their student loans;

Whereas this historic student debt crisis has left millions of Americans less prepared to weather the recession triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic as Black and Brown communities, which never fully recovered from the devastating effects of the previous economic recession, have been hit hardest by the devastating health and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic;

Whereas student debt disproportionately impacts Black and Brown borrowers, who face the worst effects of the student debt crisis, with—

(1) Black households disproportionately holding the most debt, compared to other households;

(2) Black students, due to ongoing structural barriers that have resulted in persistent racial inequities in incomes and wealth, forced to accrue more student debt and more often than their White peers;

(3) Black student borrowers struggling more in student loan repayment, including defaulting at higher rates than their White peers;

(4) nearly half of Black graduates owing more on their undergraduate student loans 4 years after graduation than they did when they received their degree;

(5) the median Black student borrower owing 95 percent of their debt 20 years after starting college, while the median White student borrower owing 6 percent of their debt after such period;

(6) Latino student borrowers, who borrow at rates similar to their White peers despite having lower household incomes and significantly less household wealth, are more likely than their White peers to default on their student loans;

(7) within 6 years of starting school, Latino borrowers are almost twice as likely to default on their student loans, in comparison to their White peers; and

(8) women of color, particularly Black women, on average take on more student loan debt than members of any other group and are more likely to face difficulties repaying student loans;

Whereas parents, grandparents, and older individuals are especially vulnerable to the burden of student loan debt, as people over the age of 50 are most likely to default on their student loans and over 114,000 retired people have had their Social Security benefits garnished due to their student loans;

Whereas almost 1/3 of the outstanding Federal student loan debt is held by individuals who did not complete their degree or program, and nearly 40 percent of Federal student loan borrowers have no degree 6 years after enrolling in college;

Whereas Black students and other students who have attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities have had to bear a larger share of student loan debt because of the historic and continued underfunding of these institutions at the State and Federal levels;

Whereas student loan debt cancellation for the families that need it most can substantially increase Black and Latino household wealth and help close racial wealth gaps;

Whereas women hold more than two-thirds of the Nation's student loan debt and must borrow an average of \$3,000 more than men to attend higher education;

Whereas, if left unaddressed, the student debt crisis will worsen inequality, exacerbate the current recession, widen the racial wealth gap, and slow economic recovery;

Whereas broad student loan debt cancellation is the most efficient and effective solution to our student debt crisis, would help millions of families, and would remove a significant drag holding back our economy;

Whereas broad student loan debt cancellation would provide immediate relief to millions of American families who are struggling during this pandemic and recession, and prevent them from having an unsustainable student debt burden waiting for them once this pandemic is over;

Whereas broad student loan debt cancellation would provide a boost to our struggling economy through a consumer-driven economic stimulus, greater home-buying rates and housing stability, expanded access to more affordable financial products including car loans and mortgages, higher college completion rates, and greater small business formation;

Whereas more than 230 community, civil rights, consumer, and student advocacy organizations have urged student loan debt cancellation for all borrowers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic public health and economic crises;

Whereas cancelling up to \$50,000 in Federal student loan debt per borrower is the most equitable way to ensure the benefits of cancellation reach the borrowers most in need of relief because that action would lift a disproportionate number of low-income borrowers and Black and Latino borrowers completely out of student debt, including nearly 90 percent of all borrowers in the lowest income quintile and over 90 percent of Black and Latino borrowers in the lowest income quartile;

Whereas borrowers who would receive full student loan debt cancellation if the Federal Government cancelled \$50,000 per borrower in student loan debt have lower income and assets than the borrowers who would receive partial cancellation if the Federal Government took that action;

Whereas Congress has already granted the Secretary of Education the legal authority to broadly cancel student debt under section 432(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1082(a)), which grants the Secretary the authority to modify, "... compromise, waive, or release any right, title, claim, lien, or demand, however acquired, including any equity or any right of redemption";

Whereas, in 2020, the Department of Education reportedly used this authority to implement relief for Federal student loan borrowers during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

Whereas, on June 29, 2020, President Donald J. Trump, with the support of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, vetoed H.J. Res. 76 "Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to 'Borrower Defense Institutional Accountability'", blocking a resolution that passed Congress with bipartisan support to overturn a Department of Education rule that makes it harder for defrauded Federal student loan borrowers to see their loans discharged: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the Secretary of Education's broad administrative authority to cancel Federal student loan debt under the existing authorities of section 432(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1082(a));

(2) calls on the President of the United States to take executive action to broadly cancel up to \$50,000 in Federal student loan

debt for Federal student loan borrowers administratively using existing legal authorities under such section 432(a), and any other authorities available under the law;

(3) encourages the President of the United States, in taking such executive action, to use the executive's authority under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure no tax liability for Federal student loan borrowers resulting from administrative debt cancellation;

(4) encourages the President of the United States, in taking such executive action, to ensure that administrative debt cancellation helps close racial wealth gaps and avoids the bulk of Federal student loan debt cancellation benefits accruing to the wealthiest borrowers; and

(5) encourages the President of the United States to continue to pause student loan payments and interest accumulation for Federal student loan borrowers for the entire duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I have a request for one committee to meet during today's session of the Senate. It has the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committee is authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

##### COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Monday, February 8, 2021, at 6 p.m., to conduct a classified hearing.

#### AMAZON

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, today, Amazon workers in Alabama will begin receiving ballots that will give them, finally, a real voice in their workplace by choosing to join a union.

Amazon would not be the massively successful company that it is and Jeff Bezos wouldn't be a multibillionaire without the hard work and the dedication of its hundreds of thousands of U.S. workers. They have put in long hours and risked their own health during this pandemic to meet the increased demand that we all know.

As of October, 20,000—think of this—20,000 Amazon workers, 20,000 workers at one company, Amazon, had contracted COVID-19. That is as of October. We know those numbers would be much higher today.

Because of their hard work, Amazon's profits have soared by more than 70 percent. The company's workers deserve to share in the success that they made possible.

Amazon claims to recognize the value of its workers. They call their workers "heroes fighting for their communities and helping people get critical items they need." Heroes, they call them.

If the company truly believed and appreciated that they were heroes, Amazon might back up its words with ac-

tion. That means letting these workers organize. It means stopping the corporate union-busting tactics that they have deployed against these workers.

Amazon, one of most powerful corporations in the world, unleashed all of that power to fight their own workers who are just asking for a voice on the job. They have harassed employees with anti-union propaganda, misleading text messages, websites, and fliers.

One Washington Post headline really said it all: "Amazon's anti-union blitz stalks Alabama warehouse workers everywhere, even the bathroom."

Workers have reported they don't get enough time for bathroom breaks in the warehouse. That is how intense the company's pressure is. When they are able to use the restroom, even there, workers are hit with anti-union propaganda fliers on the stall doors.

Amazon has repeatedly tried to block mail-in voting and force workers to hold the union election in person, putting its workers—remember, 20,000 already have been diagnosed back in October—putting its workers' health at even more risk, just to suppress the vote. It is all part of a pattern for Amazon.

In 2019, Amazon fired a Staten Island warehouse worker who called for unionization. They monitor employees' online communications. Last fall, we learned the company planned to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on new software to monitor, their words, "threats" like unions.

It is little wonder Amazon is afraid of workers getting more power. So much of their business model is built on top of exploiting workers, often Black and Brown workers and women.

Instead of employing many drivers directly, they use what they call Amazon Flex drivers. Just like with other gig economy jobs, "Flex" is corporate PR speak for denying workers their rights as full employees.

They have failed to provide complete data on COVID-19 spread in the workplace, so we really can't find out whether the company is protecting its workers' health.

Amazon rolled back its tiny \$2-per-hour pandemic raise in June. It announced a \$2-an-hour bonus pandemic raise with great fanfare many months ago. Then they rolled it back in June, and then they announced a one-time bonus of \$300 per worker, not \$3,000 per worker, \$300 a worker from a company that brought in \$200 billion in revenue the previous year. I am sorry, \$280 billion—280,000 million—\$280 billion in revenue; they gave workers a bonus of \$300.

And Amazon is not alone. The Washington Post looked at the 50 biggest corporations and found that between April and September, these companies handed out more than \$240 billion to their stockholders through stock buybacks and dividends.

Companies like that are making more and more and more money. They

are giving it back to executives and stockholders in huge dividends and stock buybacks. Yet their workers are exposed to these health hazards at work, exposed to this virus. They come home always anxious and scared about infecting their families.

The workers risk their own health, often at rockbottom wages, to make those companies so profitable.

If even a global pandemic, where America's workers have been on the frontline, if even that will not get corporations to rethink their business model that treats workers as expendable, then we have to give workers more power on the job.

A grocery store worker said: You know, they say—told me, they say I am essential, but, really, I feel expendable because they don't pay me much, and they don't protect me on the job.

#### PRO ACT

Mr. President, so what do we do?

It should mean collective bargaining. It should mean unions. It is why I joined Senator MURRAY and many of my colleagues last week to reintroduce the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, the PRO Act.

It is a comprehensive overhaul of our labor laws to protect workers' right to stand together and bargain for fair wages, fair benefits, safer workplaces.

We know corporations have attacked and undermined worker protections for decades, made it harder and harder for workers even to stand a chance in organizing a union when they choose to.

And look what has happened to our economy, as corporations take away workers' power: Productivity goes up, corporate profits soar, executive compensation explodes through the roof, but wages stay flat, and the middle class shrinks.

Just go over that again. Corporate profits, workers' productivity goes up. Workers are working harder and more efficiently. Productivity goes up, corporate profits soar, executive compensation explodes, but wages stay flat, and the middle class shrinks.

Our bill would work to level the playing field, finally give workers a fighting chance against corporate union-busting tactics like we see right now today, last week, the week before, and today at Amazon.

It would strengthen the punishment against companies that violate workers' rights to organize and the companies that retaliate against union organizers.

It would restore to an economy rigged against workers by closing loopholes that allow employers to misclassify their employees as supervisors and independent contractors so they don't have to live under labor law.

We can't in this country, whether it is in Las Cruces or in Dayton—we can't have a strong, growing middle class without strong unions.

Union members earn 19 percent more, on the average, than similar workers in nonunion jobs. They have better healthcare. They are better able to